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LESBIA

AND OTHER POEMS

WORKS BY ARTHUR SYMONS

CITIES (*Illustrated*)

CITIES OF ITALY

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF BROWNING (*New Edition*)

PLAYS, ACTING AND MUSIC

THE ROMANTIC MOVEMENT IN ENGLISH POETRY

SPIRITUAL ADVENTURES

STUDIES IN PROSE AND VERSE

STUDIES IN SEVEN ARTS

WILLIAM BLAKE

FIGURES OF SEVERAL CENTURIES

COLOUR STUDIES IN PARIS (*Illustrated*)

THE SYMBOLIST MOVEMENT IN LITERATURE (*Revised and Enlarged Edition*)

STUDIES IN THE ELIZABETHAN DRAMA

E. P. DUTTON & COMPANY

LESBIA
AND OTHER POEMS

BY

ARTHUR SYMONS

AUTHOR OF "STUDIES IN SEVEN ARTS," "COLOUR STUDIES IN PARIS," ETC.

NEW YORK

E. P. DUTTON & COMPANY

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I LESBIA

(To Lesbia.)

THE VAMPIRE

Intolerable woman, where's the name
For your insane complexity of shame?
Vampire! white bloodless creature of the night,
Whose lust of blood has blanched her chill veins
white,
Veins fed with moonlight over dead men's tombs;
Whose eyes remember many martyrdoms,
So that their depths, whose depth cannot be found,
Are shadowed pools in which a soul lies drowned;
Who would fain have pity, but she may not rest
Till she have sucked a man's heart from his breast,
And drained his life-blood from him, vein by vein,
And seen his eyes grow brighter for the pain,
And his lips sigh her name with his last breath,
As the man swoons ecstatically on death.

THE RINGS

I know you by the voices of your rings:
Unhappy and inevitable things
Cry to me in their shining silence; each
Has its own fatal and particular speech.
There is a ring with rubies that I hate:
You wear it often, and it lies in wait
Like an assassin, shooting fire at me
When your pale finger seeks it lingeringly.
Two rings I watch for, hoping, half in dread,
To see the one; but if I see instead,
Worn on the third left finger, and alone,
A certain old poor ring with a blue stone,
I pity first myself, as lovers do,
Then I forget all else, and pity you.

HER NAME

O still the same
Subtle and melancholy flame,
That winds about the soul, and spires
About the body of desires,
And is both life and death at heart!
Love comes and goes, the years depart,
But we abide; we on our ways
Conduct the visionary days
That seem to lead us; and we seem
As dreamers moving through a dream,
Who know the path we are to tread.
I loved you once, and we have said,
Each to the other, words that bind
Soul unto soul, mind unto mind,
Because they are not said in speech.
Afterward there remained to each
That other word, said best in tears;
Then shadowy and silent years;
And now I hear your name again,
And all the years have been in vain.
Have we not waited for this hour
As slaves await their day of power?

We have both triumphed; I behold
Your brightening path that shines with gold
From where I meditate in peace.
What is it, then, in this release,
That sets us free to set us thus
Where all we have is nought to us,
Seen now with one another's eyes?
We have been wise, and yet too wise,
Too wise, and yet not wise enough,
And this is the revenge of love;
Chequered and led in chains, he feels
His Kingship, at our chariot-wheels;
He knows us, conquerors though we be,
Still slaves, and in his slavery.

VAIN PRAYER

I have prayed once, as tired men pray for sleep.
That I might close the wakeful lids that keep
The watch of Memory, watching on a grave.
I have prayed once for this, only to have
Not joy, nor love, only oblivion;
For love, that was the joy of life is gone,
And, going, has left a shadow in its place,
Which is the shadow of joy's averted face.
I have prayed once, and yet, for all my pain,
I have rejoiced that I have prayed in vain.
It is incredible that such desires
Should die so meanly. God has not lit his fires
To be puffed out by any dusty breath,
That never lived which can accept of death.

VUE DU LAC

Once, in this tempest of my life,
I have been folded from the strife
Of winds that war upon my ways,
In the warm quiet of these bays.
Once I have heard, with you far hence,
The abiding sea's indifference
Murmur continually on,
Being content to be alone.
And I have once endured the peace
Of an endurable release,
Where tranquil hours have wrought for me
A respite from your memory.
Once and once only; you demand
My heart, too joyful at your hand
(Since from calm ways you call it home)
To suffer the old martyrdom.

ACCOMPLISHMENT

Why is it, since I made you thus,
  I have no peace in that I made?
Since our desire has come to us
  Why is it I am half afraid
  To look on this that I have made?

I laughed to flight Love's innocence,
  I bade a wiser love be ours,
Subtler in secret, to the sense,
  I spoiled of all but poisonous flowers
  The perfumed garden that was ours.

And now the poison-heavy breeze
  Searches the corners of my brain,
And airs of unavailing peace
  Mock me in memory, and in vain
  Innocent odours haunt my brain.

I would that you and I could be
  Once more what you and I have been;
Give back your innocence to me,
  And banish all that went between,
  All you have been, all I have been!

VANITAS

I met you at the parting of the ways,
And I have lingered with you certain days.

Over a little grave I had set a stone:
I had buried love, and I was all alone.

The roadway of the unforgotten past
Ended; the road in front lay vague and vast.

I met you at the parting of the ways,
And I have lingered with you certain days.

Because you took my hand in both your hands,
I think there may be help in other lands.

Because you laid your face against my face,
I wonder if hope lives in any place.

Because you laid my head upon your breast,
I know the earth holds yet a little rest.

ARIA

There's a tune turns, turns in my head,
And I hear it beat to the sound of my feet
For that was the tune we used to walk to
In the days that are over and dead.

Another tune turns under and over,
And it turns my brain as I think again
Of the days that are dead, and the ways she
walks now,
To the self-same tune, with her lover.

COLLOQUIES: I. PRIDE

O you may still be proud, my Soul replied
  To the disconsolate questioning
  Of eyes dejected from some hoped-for thing:
You cannot live, poor fool, without your pride.
A woman passed you in the street to-day.
  She was the fairest woman in the street,
  I watched your eyes and her eyes meet,
And in her eyes she carried you away.

II. THE WAITING FACE

I said to my friend's friend: Why do his eyes
Seem to be waiting for a thing we see not?
Why do they look before as if they waited?
And he replied to me: His soul is waiting:
It waits for Life that has gone by for ever,
It waits for Life to turn upon her pathway.

I said to my friend's friend: Why do his eyes
Seem to be listening to a thing we hear not?
Why do they look aside as if they listened?
And he replied to me: His soul is listening:
It listens to the steps of Death behind him,
The feet of Death that turn not from his pathway.

IN SUFFERING

Lightly I wrote of leaden-footed hours,
  But never knew how heavier far than lead
  Is the unhurrying and unceasing tread
When sleepless suffering longs for dawn, yet cowers
Into a terrified and huddled thing,
  As, listening to the passing of those feet,
  It waits and hates the dawn that can but greet
With its own face the face of suffering.

But now, alas! but now at last I know
  How long a day is and how long a night
  When measured out in minutes, one by one;
And half forget how short a while ago
  I dared await, without a wild affright,
  Reluctant dark and the delaying sun.

DREAMS

Tired out with grieving over love,
  Love once so kind, so cruel grown,
I wake into an alien day
  Of mere oblivion.
The white dawn gathers, aching white:
Surely I had ill dreams last night?

For, lying drowsily awake,
  Desiring only to forget,
Remembered joys return in grief,
  Kisses remembered yet,
Her lips on mine, her lips now mine
No more, or now no more divine.

Breathed on and dimmed, that face still haunts
  The mirror of my memory;
Her face—but ah, it is these tears
  That hide her face from me.
Oh Memory, from my heart remove
Even the memory of love!

ROME

I set all Rome between us: with what joy I set
The wonder of the world against my world's delight.
Rome, that hast conquered worlds, with intellectual might
Capture my heart, and teach my memory to forget!

DREAMS IN ROME

To dream or love, and, waking, to remember you:
As though, being dead, one dreamed of heaven,
and woke in hell.
At night my lovely dreams forget the old farewell:
Ah! wake not, by his side, lest you remember too!

MAGIC

If I go to the ends of the Earth, shall I find her there,
The woman I loved and who loved me and left me alone?
If I go to the hell of men's hatred, shall I find her hair
Scented as Satan's, who jibes at God on His throne?

If I find my way across the passionate Sea,
And sail in a sailing ship that the sea-wave clips,
Shall I hear her laugh as the winds laugh, laughing at me?
Never on Earth nor in Hell shall her lips touch my lips.

BY THE FOUNTAIN

I remember so well when we crept down the stair
From the room we had loved in, made bright
With the light in the room and the night in her
hair
Into the heart of the night.

The light of the night was not utterly gone
Nor the light that shone on the stair:
With no moon in the sky, by the Fountain alone
With the heart of the night in her hair.

ON LIFE AND LOVE

Now until all the world is over
There's but one Love and there's but one Lover,
Or two at most, that I can discover.
For as no love can be counted nor told
In letters of gold—gold can miscarry——
There's no use at all for such lovers to marry.
So is it now, so was it of old.
Now the face of a woman to a man is fairer——
Fairer than hell or than heaven above——
To a soul that's all afire with love,
And cares not to think if Satan snare her.
If heaven's above and hell is under
The earth we tread on, while the light lingers,
We two shall never be rent asunder.
See, I hold her hand in my fingers——
You, that have seen her not, know not her wonder.

THE STORM

You will not come out of the Storm?
The door is opened wide.
The wind howls wildly, inside all is warm.
I cannot step outside.

I know you would not come to me if I died,
You whose body is warm.
For you no more shall the door be opened
wide,
For you the wind and storm.

THE HEART

Why are you next to my heart?
You were once you, I was I.
Then did you make me start,
Then, when you used to lie?

Gone you are and your truth,
And a mere thing makes me start.
Why did you give me your youth
When you were next to my heart?

SONNET

Since all's not over, and the stars depart,
And you are here who go from me to-night,
Shall either of us ask the other's heart
Why love was ours, and why I used to write
Songs of our passion that you always kept
Out of your mother's sight, not out of yours,
That when you woke at nights or when you slept
Were part of you, and seeing what one endures
Has been so and so must be till we pass
What's called the Exit upon every Stage,
As you when your dance was over: will the glass
Of Memory, that has shown in every Age
Faces of lovers loving, leave no trace
Of ours, that on the Stage met face to face?

LAMIA

She is the very Lamia of my soul.
Does she not bite subtly? Yea, she leaves one whole
Red spot, here in my side, where most I feel
The snake untrodden by the woman's heel.
And she as Lamia veritably trod,
With snake's feet and snake's wings, the ground when God
Planted the Tree of Evil and of Good.
Is she not in the blood that feeds my blood?
Where did she bite most cruelly? Near the heart.
O Lamia, Lamia, will you never depart?

THE GIFT

You, most unlikely of all things,
To have met after all my wanderings,
What gift was given me, what gift of grace,
To have seen again your passionate face,
Nor nights nor days have bereft me of,
To have seen those eyes where some tragical love
Flown from Eternity found its nest?
Gone all the ardours that heaved your breast
When you lay in my arms and I kissed you close
And your mouth on my mouth was the mystical
rose?
Lesbia you were, Lesbia you are not. Come,
Ashes of love, and find for yourselves a home.

II INTERMEZZO

(To the Memory of Charles Baudelaire)

NINI PATTE-EN-L'AIR

(Casino de Paris)

The gold Casino's Spring parterre
Flowers with the Spring, this golden week;
Glady, Toloche, Valtesse, are there;
But all eyes turn as one to seek
The drawers of Nini Patte-en-l'air.

Surprising, sunset-coloured lace,
In billowy clouds of gold and red,
They whirl and flash before one's face;
The little heel above her head
Points an ironical grimace.

And mark the experimental eyes,
The naughty eloquence of feet,
The appeal of subtly quivering thighs,
The insinuations indiscreet
Of pirouetting draperies.

What exquisite indecency,
Select, supreme, severe, an art!
The art of knowing how to be

Part lewd, aesthetical in part,
And *fin de siècle* essentially.

The Maenad of the Decadence,
Collectedly extravagant,
Her learned fury wakes the sense
That, fainting, needs for excitant
This science of concupiscence.

PROLOGUE: BEFORE THE THEATRE

The play, who should praise? Praise rather the
actors who play!
Would you not say, as you watch, that we lived
our parts,
You who sit and watch our playing to-day,
We of each other, and almost our hearts to our
hearts,
And almost, I fancy, the Author himself as well?
He gave us our words in his story, but could he
have dreamed
We should take for our own the story he set us to
tell,
And be, for our moment, the thing that we need
but have seemed?
I swear to you, first-born and last of my heart's
one love,
That I love you not; you who love me believe
me; and you
Sob in my ears that you cannot hate me enough,
And I go on my way, and I say to my heart: It
is true!

And to you, O friend, who are tender and loving
and wise,
And a friend out of all to be loved, but by other
men,
I swear that I love you, calling my soul to my
eyes,
And alas! my friend, you always believe me
then.
How well we play our parts! Do you ever guess,
You as you sit on the footlights' fortunate side,
That we, we haply falter with weariness,
And haply the cheeks are pale that the blush-
paints hide,
And haply we crave to be gone from out of your
sight,
And to say to the Author: O our master and
friend,
Dear Author, let us off for a night, one night!
Then we will come back, and play our parts
to the end!

AT A MUSIC-HALL

The loud, oppressive orchestra,
  Panting its sultry music out,
  Is as the voice of heat without,
And, throbbing hotly, pulses "Ah,
  The wind upon the woods without!"

The glittering ballet curves and winds
  Bewildering broideries of heat;
  I feel the weariness of feet,
And how the footlights' mirror blinds
  The aching eyeballs soaked with heat.

Here in the stalls I sit and sigh
  For the renewal of the sea;
  I hear the cool waves calling me,
Where wave to cool wave makes reply
  On the Mediterranean sea.

LOVE AND ART

The sun went indistinguishably down
  Over the murky town,
Night droops about the houses heavily;
  The Temple gateways gape and frown,
But, as I enter, strangely, comes to me
The odour of patchouli.

Ah, there she flits before me, whose gay scent
  Betrays the way she went;
A corner intercepts her, she is gone;
  And as I follow, indolent,
My visiting mind, with her to muse upon,
Runs curiously on.

I seem to hear her mount the narrow stair,
  Creaking, for all her care;
And now a door flies open, just above,
  And now she laughs, to see him there,
His arms about her, and both babble of
The nonsense-verse of love.

I enter and forget them, for to-night
  I have my verse to write;
That love-song, I have yet to pare and trim.
  So should it be? or—God! the light
In that revealing casement-square grows dim:
He kisses her, and I but write of him!

NEW YEAR'S EVE

I strolled in the midnight homeward along the Strand,
And I heard the bells ring out for the new-born year,
And the tavern's light and the church's on either hand,
Shone, and the sound of a voice was in my ear.

Feeble, vibrating, faint as the voice of night,
Out of the darkness came the caressing voice;
And the church's light on the left, and the light on the right,
Shone, and the voice on the right said: "Make your choice!"

And I saw in a dream the hours of the years to be,
Tossed like foam from the billowy bells on high;
And I heard their voices, like the sound of the sea,
Call to me out of the future: I heard them cry:

"We, the hours of the year that to-night hath born,
Hold in our hands the gifts of the year to-night:
Choose, for the choice is yours ere the night be morn;
Choose, for the choice is yours ere the dark be light."

Then I saw that the church loomed up like a wall of cloud
And the tavern window glowed like a ball of fire,
And I heard the caressing voice that spake aloud
The will of my flesh and the whisper of my desire.

STELLA MALIGNA

I

STELLAE FIGURA

Her beauty has the serpent's undulant grace,
The rhythm and flow of softly fluctuant line;
And in the stealthy contours of her face,
And in her eyes, the charm is serpentine.

Her eyes have gleams that shine implacably,
A glitter cold and sharp as swords; they smile
Subtly as Vivien by the cloven tree
On Merlin growing careless of her guile.

Her face in smiling wakes strange memories,
Memories of death and old forgotten woe;
Her eyes are pools where many a drowned hope lies,
They shine above the dead who sleep below.

The very charm of death is in her look,
The fascination of all delicate deaths
Of mortals who in easeful ways forsook
The taking of so many weary breaths.

Her beauty is the mask of spectral nights;
She smiles, and tells no secret. Lips so red
Are roses for a garden of delights,
Surely, and never any garden-bed,

Flushed with a ruddier fragrance:—what of dreams!
Only shake loose the perfume of thy hair,
And let me bathe in those delirious streams,
Stella, and I intoxicate despair!

II

LAUS STELLAE

Thy beauty is a garden planted
With tropic flowers of poisonous breath,
Where, in the odorous air enchanted,
Naught blossoms but the flowers of Death.

There pale insatiate shadows creep,
Sated, yet still unsatiated;
Nor dost thou fear, so calm they sleep,
The resurrection of the dead.

Spells of Thessalian sorceresses,
Philtres in magic moonlights brewed,
Herbs plucked in ancient wildernesses
Of noon-tide deepened solitude,——

Pale witchcraft of the earlier world,
  Thy subtle poison mocks, whose cup,
Sparkling and delicately impearled,
  Once drained, shall drain all reason up.

They who drink deep of that sweet poison
  Put by the wholesome fruits of earth;
They pine where ineffectual foison
  Makes sorer their inveterate dearth.

Thy tresses are an odorous bower
  Deep-scented as, in seas afar,
The blue and burning noontide hour
  Wakes on the shores of Malabar.

Is not thy voice the voice of Lethe?
  Is not thy kiss remembered well
Where over thee and underneath thee
  The vague mists wrap the ways to hell?

The charm and terror of thine eyes
  Whisper: there may be, even so,
Airs of remembered Paradise
  On brows of angels now in woe.

III

STELLAE ANIMA CLAMAT

She sat before her mirror, and she gazed
  Deep into eyes that gazed at her again.
Oh, what sad ghosts her mournful memory raised——
  Ghosts of the days that pass and are in vain.

She saw her youth, her youth that passed; she saw
  The lovers for whose hearts she played and won.
She saw her beauty hold the world in awe,
  Triumphing over all beneath the sun.

She saw her slain revive, the tombless dead,
  Dead souls that dwell in mortal bodies yet.
She heard the maledictions that they said
  Before a bar of judgment ever set.

These were her lovers; she to them had been
  The *Rosa mystica*—rose passion-pale!
The poison 'neath the petals slept unseen;
  For she was beautiful, and man is frail.

These all rose up against her in her past;
  All these she took no thought of; but her pride
The mirror vanquished: "Youth is fleeting fast,
  And I have never tasted love!" she cried.

"O God, that I might yet before all goes
Once more be loved, and once, the last and first,
Love! I have been, yet never plucked, the rose;
And I have quenched, yet never felt, that thirst

"Whereby we put on immortality.
Is it too late I find it? must the sod
Press down this body that is all of me,
And shall not Love survive it, who is God?"

Thus, counselled of her mirror, will she lay
Sure snares, as Lilith wove her golden hair;
And someone coming softly by the way
Shall suddenly be taken unaware.

Alas for him! for it were better much
That he had never yet begun to be.
If, when she loved for play, her love was such,
What, when she loves for love's sake, shall it be?

CORRUPTIO OPTIMI PESSIMA

(On a drawing).

The smoky locks that twist about that brow
In anguish of rebellion, are the same
That bore the laurel, when the mouth's acclaim
(Wide with unspeakable woes and cursings now)
Woes heard among the sons of God, whose vow
Is ever toward the Highest. What strong shame
Has burnt upon this visage like a flame
Afire upon a temple,—strong to bow
The columns of its strength, and blacken all
The sacred writing on the pictured wall,
And lay the altar low and ruinous?
Where, when the fire has had its will, there lies
Of all once holiest underneath the skies,
A heap, a ruin, black and hideous.

THE DANCE OF THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS

A large and empty room, with a door on the right and an open fireplace on the left. On each side of the fireplace sit an old MAN AND WOMAN *representing the Body and the Soul;* THE MAN *holds an hour-glass in his hand,* THE WOMAN *a staff, with which she stirs the fire of logs.*

THE SOUL

O brother Body, we are old.
What is this numb and trembling cold
That sets us shaking like thin boughs?
Is it not winter in the House?
Sit closer to the fire and stir
The logs till they are cheerfuller,
And put a warmth into our knees;
And think no more of memories,
When we were younger, and could feel
The blood in use from head to heel.

THE BODY

O Soul, my sister, is it you
That now I must give answer to?
You who of old when I was sick
Would heal me by some heavenly trick,
And set before me when I would
The meat of dreams to be my food?
Have you forgotten with our youth
That what we will for truth is truth,
And that the flames have always been
A mirror where our eyes have seen
The dancers of those ecstasies
That were to our first opening eyes
Immortal spirits, exultant flames,
Names with the seven unspoken names?

THE SOUL

I can call up those dancers.

THE BODY

Call
The dancers up, and let them all
Dance the old way, and let them each
Speak the old way, or some new speech.
Call up the dancers.

THE SOUL

All is vain.
We live, and living is the pain
We die of while we live. This earth
Was made in some celestial mirth
Not for our pleasure. I who seem
But to remember in a dream
Some sleep bewildered thoroughfare,
Dream not, remember, and despair.

THE BODY

Dream always, and remember not.
I, if I dreamed, have yet forgot
Even the sleep. One hour I hold
An hour-glass sifting sands of gold.
Call in the dancers, for they give
Bonds to the moment fugitive,
Wings to the moment slow to pass;
Shake out the sands in the hour-glass,
Sister, O Soul, call back to-night
My dancers, spirits of delight!

The door opens and the STAGE-MANAGER, *in a mediæval dress, comes in and goes up to the front of the stage and says:*

Here, to the Soul's and Body's eyes,
Out of the flames seven spirits rise;
Now the first spirit, Lust, begins
The Dance of the Seven Deadly Sins.

While he is speaking the door again opens and a Draped Figure *Enters. The* Stage-Manager *retires to the right hand side of the stage, and stands watching every movement. The* Draped Figure, *after a few steps in a slow dance movement, stands behind* The Body *and* The Soul, *unseen by them, looking into the fire as if into a mirror, and speaks. He is* Lust. *Each Sin dances in turn.*

The Soul

O Body, is it true that I
Gave to the Worm the wings to fly?

Sloth *Enters and Speaks*

The Soul

Body, this spirit whose slow feet
Scarce stir the tiniest flame to beat,
Has surely drunk out of your veins
This slave's quiescence in its chains;
I have no part nor lot therein.

THE BODY

Thereby is Sloth the less a sin.

AVARICE *Enters and Speaks*

THE BODY

This burdened spirit is of both,
This busy Kinswoman of Sloth,
This curb upon our speed, this guest
Beneath the table at the feast,
Who, sated, like a dog would hoard
The bones he snatches from the board.

GLUTTONY *Enters and Speaks*

THE BODY

This sacred spirit of excess
Speaks wisdom in its wantonness.
Sister, my Soul, know all fruits
That grow with earth about their roots,
And there is nothing more divine
Than I have tasted in earth's wine;
Yet, filled and drunken, I have sighed,
Unsated and unsatisfied,
For those far fruits of Paradise,
The heavenly orchard of your eyes.

ANGER *Enters and Speaks*

THE SOUL

O Body, my kind enemy,
This is the voice that speaks in me
When, for the love of that delight
Which is your presence day and night,
I pour my anger for your good
Over you, like a searching flood.
O Body, it is late; the sands
Sink through the hour-glass in your hands,
And where the fiery dancers are
The word's last ashes slowly char,
And I am cold again. The voice
Of Anger is a foolish noise,
A foolish and unfriendly thing,
Body, not worth remembering.

PRIDE *Enters and Speaks*

THE SOUL

We, too, O Body, have been proud;

THE BODY

Yea, as a dead man of his shroud.

THE SOUL

I, even as Pride, have lifted up
The one intoxicating cup
Of all the knowledge of the world.

THE BODY

And I, as Pride, have snatched and hurled
The cup of Knowledge in the dust,
With hands of force and feet of lust.

ENVY *Enters and Speaks*

ENVY

My name is Envy among men.
I am the eyes of love, and when
The lover looks upon the eyes
That casket all his Paradise,
I am the longing greed of him,
And my desire makes bright the dim
Reflection of all lovely things
With covetous imaginings,
And of unlovely things I make
Things lovely for my longing's sake.
I am desire of good, desire
Of beauty, I alone inspire
Perfecting thirsts that emulate
Each last draught of the ultimate.
I know no measure, nothing is
Unsought by my swift avarice,
That would unyoke the shining seven
Pleiades from the shafts of heaven,

Unanchor the moon's crescent boat,
Ravish the song from the bird's throat,
And from all mortal sweets distil
The elixir of the impossible.
Man knows me not; he calls my name
Envy, not knowing what I am.
I speak all tongues; also I speak
The learning all the ages seek,
Some capture, and all leave behind;
I take the earth into my mind,
Unto my heart I gather love.
I lust not, nor sloth—heavy move,
No miser nor no wine-bibber,
Nor is my tongue hasty to stir,
Nor my eyes proud; but I am wise
As the snake's tongue, the woman's eye.

THE BODY

Dancers, I tire of you. I tire
Of all desire save one desire.

THE SOUL

Dancers, I tire of you. I tire
Of all desire save one desire:
That I were free of you. Mine eyes
Are heavy with your mockeries.

Dancers, I am more tired than you.
When shall the dance be danced all through?
The fire is nearly dead; and one
By one the last sands fall; the sun
Will meet the darkness on its way.
O Body, is it nearly day?

THE BODY

Would it were that last day of days!

The STAGE-MANAGER *comes forward to the front of the Stage and says:*

Does not each morning that decays
To midnight end the world as well,
In the world's day, as that farewell
When, at the ultimate judgment-stroke,
Heaven too shall vanish in pale smoke?

HELEN AND FAUSTUS

I

The famous Faustus is not dead.
I tell you that his spirit lied.
His body burst his coffin-lead
The third day after he had died.
So in the Legend it is said,
Also that Knowledge was his Bride.
Some say he perished in his pride,
But I say no. The books he read
Were part and parcel of his soul
But he was made to be unwise.
What weight has wisdom when the skies
Hid from this learned man the hole
Into the which he had to stumble?
The Devils in Hell are never humble.

II

The Devil tempted him. He came
Winged, wordless, into Faustus' room,
And in his eyes the infernal flame
Shone, and he lighted up the gloom.

Now Faustus heard another name
That was not his. Senses consume
Themselves as, with her intense perfume,
The word was Helen. Hot with shame
The Wizard's visage was drawn in
As if he saw a certain thing
And not of his imagining
That danced in the air, that painted Sin
After the old inevitable fashion
When Lilith gave the snake her passion.

III

Here where I write the Sea-gulls shout
That have the spirits of the storm
In their winged bodies, ringed about
With beauty more than woman's; warm
In winter when the wolves are out.
God gave them an inhuman face
No Satan ever can deform.
To Faustus the eternal Doubt
Came and the colours of the World
Were changed and purple turned to blood
In the magic circle where he stood,
And then a venomous Serpent curled
Into no hideous shape but loathing
All other than his painted clothing.

IV

Now Helen's spirit was a bird
And she an untired Wanderer
To whom all loveless words unheard
Were subtle to the sense of her;
She, kissed by Paris, for a word
That stung like salt. None lovelier
Drew in her breath, none lovelier
Drew in her breath, when she was stirred
By all that world of Sea and Stone
On her lone island, where the Sea
Shook her imagination furiously.
She loved no beauty save her own,
And, as she walked in that white city,
Men said of her: "She has no pity."

V

Love was not ever for her enough.
She felt no throbbing in her heart
At the mere utterance of Love.
She nothing had but Beauty. Art
To her was less than woven stuff
Her Asian-maids wove; she, apart,
Waited for visions to depart
No Asian moons had knowledge of.
She knew the turning of the Wheel

Of Destiny might bruise her heel
As slaves do when they slay a snake.
Knew she that flames may be fain to steal
Their own flames and make Troy to reel
And simply for her's, Helen's, sake?

VI

I have forgotten Faustus. He
Has dropt in fear his magic book
Because the buzzing of a bee
Attracts him with its strange rebuke.
Then suddenly in irony
His conjuring-wand from out its nook
Falls. Satan's eyes have changed their look.
Now, as a wind-blown tapestry
Shakes and the paintings on it change
Their aspects, and the very dust
Stirs on the floor, it seems most strange
That he, now in the spirit's toil,
Should have the sense in him to spoil
The Architecture of his Lust.

VII

Suddenly the Arch-Demon spoke.
"Faustus, I come to you from Hell.
Some souls are burdened by the yoke

Of chastisement irrevocable.
There Arctino cries 'Souls to sell!'
Writhes in imagination to invoke
Some scandalous and obscene joke.
He sees gigantic serpents swell
Bigger than ever; and he, lithe
Still, loves to see them as they writhe.
Soon all his merriment is over.
A woman comes and laughs at him
Showing seductiveness of limb
She showed on earth to her last lover.

VIII

"I come to bargain for your soul,
Your Soul, whole-fashioned for your Sin
Which has not fathomed yet the whole
Of Evil that is compassed in
A virgin-martyr's aureole.
There are many doors that open in
One Hell to which souls may not win
Unless they enter, shoal by shoal,
Past even your imagining
Of the immensity of your Fall.
You might as well ask a naked wall
As ask of me this only thing:
'When shall I fall in the Pits of Evil?'
Where there's no God, there's no Devil!"

IX

Then something sinister takes place
All of a sudden. The hour-glass
Stops dropping silent grains; a race
Of shadows, mocking shadows pass;
The ceiling like a drunk ship sways;
No minute passes as it was;
The floor heaves up, the floor turns grass;
And on the spirit of Faustus weighs
As the eternity of a verse
The condemnation that shall capture
The intimate limits of his flesh
Irrevocably now in Satan's mesh,
And unimaginably worse
Than the sinful body's ultimate rapture.

X

Down the blown valleys of the Sea
He shudders and the race begins
Of waters heaving heavily
Over his head and something spins
A devil's web that arrogantly
Sets water-rats to shake their shins
And all the flesh that is his skin's
Is changed immensely. Is this he

That in his utter anguish craves
More than the immunity of slaves
That desire nothing but damnation?
All's lost. See how a madman raves
Hurled this and that way by the waves
Down the long way to Annihilation!

XI

He rises shaken out of sleep
And sees no spirit there but one
Whose eyes are fathomless and deep
As the sea's depths when day has won
Its way from night. Steep after steep
Rises, he sees her eyes: nay, none,
None lovelier ever saw the sun
Out of the fiery ocean leap.
Her eyes have known Eternity,
Her mouth that smiles not is most cruel.
And all her body is a wonder.
Hades she haunts, has heard Hell thunder.
What is more cruel than a jewel
That flames, laughs, lightens furiously?

XII

As from the bowl one spills the wine
And then one overturns the bowl,
Helen's long laughing eyes divine

Shine as the symbol of her soul.
Now Faustus wavers, mad, malign,
She turns upon him with the whole
Of her white purity, love's goal.
"Faustus, you never shall be mine.
It is so long since I have been dead
I know not why I breathe the air
For in the grave there is no sighing.
To have slept for centuries in one bed
God knows I had reason to be fair:
God knows if there's an end of dying."

XIII

The famous Faustus is not dead.
Now, as for Helen, has she gone
Back to the eternity of her bed
That she alone has slept upon?
The world goes on; over her head
Men pass and women: she, ever alone,
Lies, lonelier than any stone.
I would that all the words she said
Were written; these, alas, are lost.
Her, not the uncounted years destroy
If she were angry as a ghost,
What would the wind say and the frost,
For she the gate of Death has crossed,
Of all that remains of Helen and Troy?

HELEN

That heavenly Helen, whose hot lips
The felon's heart of Paris close,
A city's hell, a hell of seven ships,
Hell of men's hearts, in her alcove
Sees shapes of saffron, shapes of mauve,
Move, wave, until the inevitable
Stings of desire as serpents' stings
Give her the after-taste of hell.
See how the soul within her springs
From the woven robe that to her clings,
About a body made too fair
For any woman to endure:
That beauty and that heavy hair,
Those eyes that many passions lure,
That flesh so pure to the impure,
The impure that mock her in the streets
And follow her to the market-place.
O Helen of the sensual heats
The blood gives when the sun's disgrace
Sheds all his heat, now over Thrace,
Now over Argos, will you not,
Now that the dark falls and the gloom

Of night begins, begin to plot
With me in your close-scented room
More than the odour of your perfume
Can give to any man but one,
One, your last lover? See the fire
Of sunset's over and the sun
Descends: the moon has her desire.
This hour our Destiny has spun
A web that might unweave the sun.

A SONG FOR HELEN

O how her tide did burn
Against the sun's heat,
Now in a little urn,
Hushed her heart's beat,
Helen's most piteous dust
Must come to nought!
Nothing but love and lust
Left, and our thought.

SONG

A song for Helen who shall sing
That adores Helen as his breath
And holds the world a trivial thing
Beside the majesty of Death?

Her beauty wrought the world no wrong,
Men's souls she fastened in her snare:
Who now shall sing an idle song
Into the void imperishable air?

III BIRDS IN THE NIGHT

(To Iris)

MUSIC

Music for joy:
Joy waits on sadness to be sweet;
Music is sad,
And waits on gladness to complete
The unimaginable joy where joy and sorrow meet.

Music for love,
When love lies dreaming of delight;
Music when love
Shines upward on an angel's flight;
And for all happy lovers music, music day and night.

Bid music cease,
When love is said, when love would weep;
Music is sad,
For her exultant voices keep
Endless desire, infinite sorrow, but not hope nor sleep.

THE GYPSY'S SONG

The Gypsy said: I'm here to thrive,
  The earth he is my bed,
But as for coming here to wive,
  The Devil strike me dead!

I've had enough of Concubines,
  To last for ever so long;
There's always taverns for drinking wines—
  Let's end the night with a song.

We loves to jiv along the roads,
  We and our Caravans,
And when we comes on hopping toads
  Chais lift their hands like fans.

We always loves to light a fire
  Near by the gorse and sedge;
It smokes and then it rises higher:
  Liz leans against the hedge.

We always loves of the air its scent
  And all the winds that pass,

And then we fix with thorns our Tent—
Smoke scars the greenest grass.

Now if I wishes for anything
In hell or up above
The blood's on fire for wandering
And the heart in me burns for love.

A DRINKING SONG

I give you my lips to drink,
I give you in truth
Less than you choose to think
In your wild youth
Of how wine is lifted up,
One's song is sung,
And that your mouth's the cup
And that you're young.

SONG FOR ISEULT

The Heart cries for light
And the soul for Desire
In the midst of the Night
In the heart of the Fire.
They cry for all things
That are and that were.
Desire alone brings
All the night in her hair
To me as I sit
And gaze on the fire.
Finite and infinite
Are the Gods of the Fire!

THE CURLEW

Thrice have I heard the Curlew cry.
Thrice, as the ominous bird of night
And as the sea-foam was scattered high
And the naked dancers in the sky
Had given over dancing, and an evil eye
Shone like hell's fire, and the angel of light
Had folded his wings, not as the wings
Of the wind-blown sea-gulls that laugh as they fly
And hide in their hidden hearts such things
As they alone know of, I was aware
Of a sudden heat and a change in the air
And the opening somewhere of a door
That opened on nothing, but out of it shone—
Transverse on the sea-waves' shifting floor—
A light more strange than when night is come
And the new dawn burns. Lo and it turns,
Turns on itself, and the sea's floor burns,
And the very space before me is thinned,
And the thing that looms there, is it not I?
Thrice have I heard the Curlew cry
And thrice I have cried with the voice of the
wind.

OLD BONES

He'll never make old bones,
At least I think not;
He'll sit on the ancient stones,
At least he shall drink not
Of wounds that are worse than moans;
But if he shall sink not
Under a woman's burden he'll live on
Under a toad-like stone,
And, as far as he can prove it,
Shall try to love it,
Being more utterly inhuman
Than any woman
God ever made out of clay.
The stone's image shall vanish away
And the woman at his side
Shall be one of the images
Made by the evil ones
Out of the ruins of moons and suns,
Not out of the whirling tide
Of the imaginary seas;
She shall be no man's bride,
None shall bend at her knees.

And, before the world turns over
And tries to sleep,
This love-drunken man shall be her lover,
Blood between them shall leap—
Blood shall cry out for blood,
And down from the mountains steep
There shall be blood on the flood,
Men's blood under the stones;
And, as long as the world shall sleep,
He'll never make old bones.

THE AGATE

I cut an agate for a stone
And this I put into a cleft
And I was with the wind alone
And nothing else of me was left,
But what in cutting it I had lost.
Now had one lost the wind and rain
One had no reason, even a ghost
Has much more reasoning than men.
And still I wander on alone
And there's a something in my mind,
Of having cut an agate-stone
That jogs at me from far behind
And makes me more uneasy than one
Who having not counted up the time
Knows that the deed he has not done
Counts for an agate in his crime.

IN THE WOODS

I have made a beautiful fire:
I am in haste to be gone.
The winds and the woods had the sound of a lyre,
And my feet were tangled by many a briar,
And the sun went out and the moon mounted higher,
And the tall thick grasses I trod upon
Were soft and sweet to my rapid feet,
And the man I walked with was one
Who loved nature much more than I did.
For myself, being proud, whatever my pride did,
That I forgot in the simple pleasure
Of being very much at my leisure;
So that, in the very heart of the wood
A bird's voice sang to my blood.

DUST

There is a demon in the mind
And an evil wind that blows behind
The dust of the world in one heap to bind.

He follows us as the moon the sun—
He says, "What have I done? I have done
The deed that I dare not think upon."

We fly from him to the arms of sleep,
And sleep refuses sleep. We steep
Our senses in the dust that's a-heap.

SONG

When there's a noise among the dead
That perished in the night
Enough to waken in their bed
Slim girls with heels that smite
A man's bare flesh, heels with their heels,
And bodies side by side,
It's awful to think what a dead man feels
With Death for his only bride.

THE ADDER

If anything on earth be found
To root our feet upon the ground
It must be one
Thing and one single thing alone:
A glass of wine
That makes the sun much less divine
And makes the subtle moon to wain
And casts the slayer from the slain.

After the solace of our verse
The next thing is the Art to curse
Someone we hate.
"O Adder at my garden gate
That have your passions night by night,
Please me and bite
Before the sun has fallen low
Mine enemy and not your foe."

At which mine Adder ceased to glide
And glared at me in sullen pride
And lifted up
His head that does not care to stoop,

And said to me:
"Nay, not thine ancient enemy,
For he is less than anything——
Less than the least—to deserve my sting.

"The poison that I hide within
This sinful thing that is my skin,
From evil sprung,
Surges into my cloven tongue.
The Devil made
Me out of some unholy shade;
But, as you see I suck this root,
The Devil has no cloven foot.

"Once in the Garden of God I trod,
When Satan was mine only God;
And, by these stings
The Devil knows if I had wings.
There Lilith grew
Out of a drop of poisoned dew;
And, by her blood, by which I fell,
Beware of the Garden-Gate of Hell!"

SALOME

When Salome lifting up
In her painted hands the cup,
Symbol of her virginhood,
Her perverse, pure eyes malign
See, instead of signs of wine,
Frantic, to her vision, blood.

One foot twisted in advance
In the rhythm of the dance
Beats upon the perfumed floor.
Now a sound upon her jars
Like the sound of iron bars,
Like the clashing of a door.

The winds tangle round her waist,
On her lips she feels the taste,
Taste forbidden to her lips.
What is this that she drinks in?
Is it that the House of Sin
Her imagination grips?

Morbid ardour in her grows,
In her cheek no colour glows,

Heat of anguish in her stirs:
What is this she sees in space,
Hanging in mid-air, a face,
Lifeless, sinister as hers?

Stung by sterile stings of drouth
All the hotness of her mouth
Makes her aching senses thirst
For that thing that cannot be:
Hate of her Virginity,
Seizes on her, She, the Accursed!

Shaken as the snakes in grass
Eyes her wan Herodias,
Daughter of a King of Kings.
Herod, writhing on his throne,
Feels her fingers to the bone
Clutching at his jewelled rings.

THE FLAMES OF HELL

These women had gold hair about their brows
While they were living: now the worm feels that,
Feeding upon their flesh. They shall rise up,
Not till *that* day, when God shall call for them;
But they shall rise. O women that have sinned,
Shall God have pity? God shall not have pity.
There is much gold hair that the flames of hell
Shall take fast hold on. Bodies are not white
For heaven, where the blood shall wash them clean:
These women's bodies are too white; sweet scents
Burn fiercely; there's a fragrant pile for hell.
O mystery of beauty, and this flesh
God hath no part in! yet so beautiful.
Man born of woman, born under the law,
Conceived in sin, sins most of all in this,
And takes damnation on him with a kiss.
And these lips rotted into dust! Graves hide
The end of women's beauty; a kind friend,
Close and discreet; but we'll not think of that.
Paris would loathe his Helen could he see her,
But Paris too is dust. I'm breathing yet,

Although I haunt the tombs; and are there not
Women, with golden hair about their brows,
This side the mould? and they are calling me,
They smile, their eyes are as a light, I run,
I would embrace them, and drink down at once
Death, and the second Death. O I am sick,
Sick toward the ending, and mine eyes draw in
Distempered visions. But this kills me. Come,
Women my flesh and spirit tremble for;
Delay no longer, O delay not, see,
I call to you, I stretch my hands, come, come,
I can not do without you—It is vain
This violence of passion leaves me faint.
Dead women, be my brides once more. Not Death
Shall be more amorous of you; not the clods
Clip you with closer arms. Mine, mine, all mine.
And there is all this beauty underground,
And there their worm dieth not, nor is the flame
Quenched, but these fair women that have sinned
Shall have their portion in the burning lake,
And so live beautiful for ever. God,
Have this much pity, let men look across
The great gulf hewn of nether air, that holds
A void of footless darkness, let them see
Pale, with their branch of barren palm, their robes
Glimmering in the brighter light than day,

Those saints, their rivals: grant them this, O God!
They, beautiful for ever, shall rejoice
Even in the flames of hell, despising still
Those women who are haggard even in heaven!

EPITHALAMIUM

Sister, the bride-bed waits; sister for thee;
The bride-bed waits for thee and me.
Sisterly hours together, hand in hand,
Beat out an epithalamy:
Love and the night, come softly, hand in hand!

Love and the night, come swiftly, hand in hand,
That we may reach the longed for land,
O night of love, before the dark be dead,
Or the pale morning understand
Why the moon faints and why the stars lie dead.

Sister, the moon shall faint, the stars lie dead,
Sister, above our marriage-bed,
The fruitless stars, the chaste and sterile moon,
While we, in maiden nuptial wed,
Taunt with her single maidenhood the moon.

Sister, O sister maiden, maiden moon,
The joy, the aching joy to swoon
Into thine arms, into thine arms to die!
Sweet bride, thy maiden bridegroom, soon
Into the rapture of thine arms to die!

PIERROT

I that am Pierrot, pray you pity me!
To be so young, so old in misery:
See me, and how the winter of my grief
Wastes me, and how I whiten like a leaf,
And how, like a lost child, lost and afraid,
I seek the shadow, I that am a shade,
I that have loved a moonbeam, nor have won
Any Diana to Endymion.

Pity me, for I have but loved too well
The hope of the too fair impossible.
Ah, it is she, she, Columbine! again
I see her, and I woo her, and in vain.
She lures me with her beckoning finger-tips;
How her eyes shine for me, and how her lips
Bloom for me, roses, roses, red and rich!
She waves to me the white arms of a witch
Over the world: I follow, I forget
All, but she'll love me yet, she'll love me yet!

No, I shall never, never call you mine,
Escaping and eternal Columbine.
Once Watteau knew you, a Marquise; you played

A pastoral of love in masquerade.
King Louis turned his head to see you pass,
Superbly, at Versailles, upon the grass,
And I, poor Pierrot, turned my head away:
You did not see the tears I wept that day.

Later, you woke from sleep when Deburau
Found me in Paris, fifty years ago.
I beat my wings against the footlights' glare,
You were an actress, and I sought you there;
And I adored you for your rouge, the grace
Of your fictitious and diviner face;

But some one bought you. Last, a silhouette,
You mocked me in the magic of Willette,
Flittingly fin-de-siècle and feline at
The hostel guarded by a Sable Cat.
Columbine of the ages! if to-day
I find you, in no masquerade array,
But here, and now: oh! somewhere, surely, here,
You hide until the moment: nay, appear!

Nay, but I see you: is it you, divine,
Or you, perchance diviner, Columbine?
I will go seek you, moonbeam, once again,
And if I seek you, must it be in vain?
Kind friends, I think 'tis she: and if 'tis she,
I, that am Pierrot, pray you pity me!

DANTE IN HELL

When Dante Alighieri entered that hollow place
Hell and saw wild whirls of confused smoke
Like glaring tapers round a painted face
And found himself among such evil folk
God had condemned—for where in heaven a space
For such as these?—and saw under the yoke
Of shameful sins, the inevitable disgrace
The earth endured ere the first woman spoke
One word to the man she loved not; then his eyes
Darkened a little, and as Virgil came
Nearer to him, the whole sense of that impure
Air and its heat and its intolerable flame
Tortured his vision, and he felt the obscure
Desire of an unenviable Paradise.

SONNET

O Divine Water loved by Æschylus,
Who, God in Man, created Tragedy
Out of void Chaos' aching agony,
And, out of the anguish of Prometheus
Gave to the Fire-Bringer who rules over us
More than Zeus gave man, fire-fledged Sorcery
And a bewitched life over the Caspian Sea,
Loveless, but adored by the winds perilous
That toss the sea-waves into hostile storms;
Seeing in midnights more prodigious forms,
And in the noon's heats hell's insanities;
And for his heart, that seat of ancient wrongs,
The winged Oceanides and their scented
songs:
Last, God-created Aristophanes.

SONNET

Why is it that you use your fascination
Of fatal beauty that has power to ensnare
Even the serpents in their violation
Of all that's sane in webs of woven hair
And set them into deeds of vile sedition
As rebels round a city mutinous
That fall into the folds of their perdition
And are for that more subtly poisonous?
Simply that you are impelled by an obsession
To do all evil and to do no good,
As a pure virgin in her first confession
Lets out the secret of her innocent blood,
Nor sees in the hidden monk behind the grate
A conscience-stricken face consumed with hate.

DEIRDRE

There was much crying in the wind
Late last night
As of the crying of a soul that had sinned
And longed for the light.

But I have seen to-day
With John in a café a child
Who seemed so tragic, that play
Was lost to her, never she smiled.

Adorable, passionate,
Loveless, the child in her chair,
Casting her eyes down, sat—
The Sun might have envied her hair.

She had taken my hand, then turned
Her eyes on me, pure as the sky.
If ever a man's heart to her yearned,
Mine did, I know not why.

THE HOUR

You might put a little life
Into this sullen hour.
The world is sick of strife:
Why all this lust for power?

Each minute some man dies:
Dead men rise never again.
The cold and cruel skies
Look down upon the slain.

THE OLD GYPSY

She is too old to see again
The age of threescore years and ten;
She is as hale as an old tree,
Straight as its shrivelled stem, and dark
And full of wrinkles as its bark;
Children and grandchildren has she,
Fourteen they are and forty-three,
And sixty years has she been wed,
And never slept in any bed
Under a roof of tile or slate,
And never will, alive or dead,
And whether death come soon or late.
Her hands are heavy with gold rings,
She has three rings of heavy gold
On every finger, earrings old
Of gold, and gold and orange things
For kerchiefs and head-coverings.
Her voice is gentle as a bird's,
And there is savour in her words,
For she, although with stealth she hoards
The private speech her people have,
Knows well the depth of every lav.

Her eyes are secret, and her mouth
A gentle and grave hypocrite;
She reads the heart of age and youth,
Seeing, not understanding it,
And tells for money half the truth;
But in her ancient soul there lies,
Deeper than she can ever look,
The roots laid open like a book
Of earth and of our destinies.

THE JEW

A poor old man, a crossing-sweeper, stands
Bent on his broom that sweeps a foot of way;
A fat, furred Jew with jewels on his hands
Passes the crossing-sweeper twice a day.

His eyes are swollen with covetousness and fat,
His fingers swell about his jewelled rings;
Into the old man's stained and battered hat
A penny, once a month or so, he flings.

The old man, who is humble, poor, and wise,
Takes up the penny and says Thank you, Sir;
And the kind Jew, to purify his eyes,
Rivets them back upon his rings and fur.

NIGHT AT HAMPSTEAD

The damp and sweet breath of the night!
Lean out of the window, your cheek on the ivy,
My cheek on your cheek, O my dear and delight!

Look up now, the stars overhead!
Look yonder, the gas where it trembles reflected,
Three flames on the glass with its socket of lead.

See there, where the leaves of the trees,
Black shadows that droop on the wall and its whiteness,
Weave the dark into lace that flaps loose in the breeze.

See the trees, the great trees by the house,
The trees where the light is the ghost of the daylight,
And the trees with the night tangled fast in their boughs.

Dream on then, my dear and delight!
The breath of the world pulses faint in the city,
Here is the damp and sweet breath of the night.

TO A GREY DRESS

There's a flutter of grey through the trees:
Ah, the exquisite curves of her dress as she passes
Fleet with her feet in the path where the grass is!

I see not her face, I but see
The swift re-appearance, the flitting persistence——
There!—of that flutter of grey in the distance.

It has flickered and fluttered away:
What a teasing regret she has left in my day-dream,
And what dreams of delight are the dreams that one may dream!

It was only a flutter of grey;
But the vaguest of raiment impossible chances
Has set my heart beating the way of old dances.

THE FLOODS AND THE ASHES

Love that hath eaten ashes, and hath mingled
weeping
Into his drink and bread;
That hath been in cities fallen, a sentinel keeping
Watch where a host has fled;
Love that hath watched by night when every man
was sleeping,
How have men called thee dead?

The floods have lifted up, O Love our Lord, their
voices,
The floods lift up their waves;
Thou that art mightier than many waters' noises
Shall from the deep sea-graves
Lift up alive the soul that in thy love rejoices,
Love that is lord and saves.

CLEOPATRA

Your eyes have drunk Eternity:
  They haunt me in oblivious hours,
  And follow me among the flowers;
Your eyes hold fast the mystery
  Of other memories than ours.

Within your immemorial eyes
  There sits the cruelty of Time
  In its indifference sublime;
Empty, and infinitely wise,
  Your eyes out-reach the bounds of Time.

I gaze into your endless gaze,
  I lose myself as in a sea;
  I love myself, content to be
A stream that all its nights and days
  Lives but to die into the sea.

BANISHMENT

That you should live, be blithe and well,
When I am dead and in my grave,
It seems a thing incredible
If Death be not a lying knave.

My life began with yours, and now
In my sad dark oblivion
I shall not know how long or how
I am to leave you to go on.

I shall be somewhere, I suppose,
For nothing that began can end:
What is it worth to be a rose
And not to recognise one's friend?

What if the love that makes my soul
A thing identical with you
Should lose in some vast selfless whole
That single self we came into?

How could I, being that speechless thing,
Cry out, or in the rose's scent
Of inmost ardour breathe and bring
You news out of my banishment?

IN REGENT'S PARK

Is it the chilly winter grass
That seems as green as if to lay
A carpet for the spring to pass?
Is it a gladness in the day
That wakes this joy upon my way?

Is it that idly I observe
The misty trees, the water's white?
For all my body is a nerve
Strung for the fingers of delight,
And earth is musical with light.

Dear, once we wandered in this park,
Strangers together, side by side,
At the grey falling of the dark;
And now, how many leagues divide
Our feet, and how the world is wide!

And yet to-day, though you are far
And I am lonely, how my soul
Leaps out to find you where you are,
Because a word has put the whole
Of life into a dream's control!

Love that makes wisdom foolish, makes
The folly of the lover wise,
Who out of dreams of beauty wakes
To see the world with subtler eyes,
And turns delight to Paradise.

Blind love, that brings the gift of sight,
Makes and unmakes the world anew;
I see all beauty in the light
Of my imaginings of you:
All's beauty, since a dream came true!

TO THE DEAD

Is there a waking sorrow in the grave?
Is it not over, all that holds from sleep?
No more the heavy-footed hours shall creep,
No more in vain man's longing heart shall crave.
The long suspense is over; earth that gave
Calls back the gift—Ah, who should strive to keep?
Dust over dust, a little narrow heap
Holds all we love—Ah, who should strive to save?

Peace, peace is yours, O dead, and yours alone.
What peace hath man, unstable man, whose breath
Serves but in vain to winnow fruitless chaff?
Yet will he ever seek, who ne'er hath known
The flying phantom Peace, till lastly Death
Writes in that word the final Epitaph.

HAPPINESS

Happiness, too warm and deep,
Shuts the eyes of love asleep,
Love that watching for the thief
Is only kept awake by grief.
Fear not grief: take grief for a crutch;
But fear to be happy overmuch.
The heart beats like a passing bell:
All is not well, when all is too well!
And the heart that watches, watches less
When it's well afloat upon happiness.

A SONG AGAINST SORROW

Only there must be no ending!
If your heart's afraid of winter,
Where an open door is standing
Go your ways and do not enter.
If you enter I retain you
For the soft and stormy weather,
And we watch the world together
While you hold me, while I chain you.

Time's a stream and love is fleeting,
And to-day is soon to-morrow,
And the hours grow tired repeating
Joy but not repeating sorrow.
What's the message Time is sending?
"Roses fade and daylight closes,
Lovers' joys are like the roses";
Only, there must be no ending!

THE OWL

I heard the hooting of the White Owl,
Not as far off as the sea,
And in the sultry passion of the night
I knew not what came to me;
Only the voice of an inhuman thing
Thrilled in my ears,
And I stood lonely, listening,
As if from the eternal years
The Owls had hooted, as if the Owls had sinned
And had eaten some insane root,
The moon, the night, the mystery of the wind,
Myself, and the White Owl's hoot.

THE SONG OF THE POPPIES

It is a great thing to be born,
A greater thing to live.
Red and black poppies, you are torn
Out of the heart of darkness; scent
That I breathe is poisonous.
For my scent are you meant
Things forgotten to forgive?
Leaf with leaf has grandeur and
I think that you understand
Why it is you have to live,
Flame without shame, luxurious,
Dragging at the roots of us.
Rudely rooted from the soil,
For you face me in my room,
Dazing me with your perfume,
Not one breath of air to soil
Your beauty stranger than all things.
For you are the Kings of Kings
In the region of the flowers.
In the halls of Hades you
Counted the enchanted hours
For ravished Proserpine his bride,

Where the black-winged raven flew
By the sullen Styx's side.
Earth cries out of her acrid womb,
As she sees you: Can I forgive
All that glory of your life,
I that am neither maid nor wife,
I that know not night from morn?
It is a great thing to be born,
A greater thing to live.

SONG

My silks I put away
Into a scented room
Where the night-moths can play
With their own perfume.

And then away I went
But left a lovely cloth
To perfume with its scent
The perfumed moth.

SONG OF THE FIRE

There is a great passion in the Fire
That glows with glamour and flames
Into colours more fierce than Fame's
And the Song of the fire is the song of its desire.

The fire eats the heart of the wood
Until into ashes it turns
And the wood burns and the fire burns
And the fire's blood drinks the wood's blood.

THE ROSE AND THE RAIN

Her rose fell off in the rain
And I picked it out of the mud.
The scene was Madrid in Spain,
And why did it touch my blood?

She knew (what nobody knows)
What was the reason in Spain
That I never gave back her rose,
That she followed me back in the rain.

A VISION OF KINGS

Kings have cast down their crowns for this
One word of the Unattainable.
The very Slaves of the Abyss
Are named by this. Hell is not Hell,
Nor is God only in Heaven alone:
Silent in Heaven is God's name.
So, as time's measured by a stone
And all the stars are mocked by flame
And the world moves always and the Sun
Shines and the moon fades out in turn
And all that we have ever done
Shall, somehow, as the world might, burn:
So, all the Fate that falls on Kings
Shall fail as fails each period,
And the beginning and the end of things
Move somewhere out of sight of God.

THE CROSS

When Jesus Christ was crucified
A sudden darkness fell.
The hearts in the three Maries cried:
He hath gone down to Hell!
And then again the darkness broke
And still the Cross was there.
Satan behind the Cross like smoke
Tossed in the wind his hair.

Over their heads a vulture swung,
One heard the gallows creak,
And still nailed on His Cross there hung
Christ and His eyes did speak.
Then Satan turned his back in spite,
His shadow transverse fell.
Judas Iscariot, hot as night,
Gaped like the mouth of Hell.

IV SILHOUETTES

(To José Maria de Elizando)

A DEATH IN THE FOREST

The wind is loud among the trees to-night,
It sweeps the heavens where the stars are white
I know: it is the angel with the sword.
Ah, not the woman, not the woman, Lord!

The wind is loud, I hear it in my brain,
I hear the rushing voices of the rain,
Hers in the rain, and his that once implored.
Ah, not the woman, not the woman, Lord!

Hands in the trees, hands in the flowing grass,
They wave to catch my spirit as I pass.
I have no hope to pass the ghastly ford.
Ah, not the woman, not the woman, Lord!

I see her tresses, floating down the wind:
Her eyes are bright: it is for these I sinned.
We sinned, and I have had my own reward.
Ah, not the woman, not the woman, Lord!

She has a little mouth, a little chin:
God made her to be beautiful in sin,
God made her perfectly, to be adored.
Ah, not the woman, not the woman, Lord!

We sinned, but it is I who pay the price:
I say that she shall dwell in Paradise.
For me the feast in hell is on the board.
Ah, not the woman, not the woman, Lord!

IN THE CATHEDRAL AT BARCELONA

Out of the sun a sudden shade,
  The shadow of the wings of God,
As if the Holy Dove had laid
  Dim quiet on the holy sod.

What cool, what infinite repose!
  Behold the nearer heaven on high,
And, through the window of the rose,
  Purple and gold and rose, the sky.

BARCELONA

The white and brown of fifty masts
Chequer the depths of blue below,
Where in the harbour, to and fro,
The little white sails go.

A mule mounts slowly up the hill,
A red-capped peasant, half-asleep,
Nods on his back; the small black sheep
In slow procession creep.

Far as to where the mountains meet
The sky that gently silvers down
The roofs and windows of the town
Swarm grey and white and brown.

Filmy and blue the sky above,
A burning blue the depths below,
Where in the harbour, to and fro,
The little white sails go.

PANTORBO

Salvator Rosa piled those rocks,
  Thus wildly, under that wild light,
Or else fantastic Nature mocks
  His finite with her infinite.

Grey ruinous heights that rise in towers,
  That fall in gorges down the steep,
Stark trees that never feel the showers,
  And rocky torrents buried deep.

Tormented wrathful ghosts of hills
  That bear the scars of ancient woes,
And chafe beneath the doom that fills
  Their hollows with a loathed repose.

MADRID

A beggar smoking a cigar,
Here at the corner of the street,
Strums feebly on an old guitar.

He strums an air half sad, half sweet,
An air of laughter and of cries,
Here at the corner of the street.

The beggar lifts his sightless eyes
While the pathetic music thrills
The air with laughter and with cries.

Rattling the plate that never fills
A woman reaches piteous hands
While the pathetic music thrills.

Wrapt in his cloak the beggar stands,
Impassive, while the wife implores——
A woman reaching piteous hands.

IN THE PRADO

The black mantilla drapes with grace
  The lustrous blackness of her hair,
And to the pallor of her face
  Gives that bewitching air.

Her closed fan rests against her cheek
  Just where the dimple might have been;
She turns her head, and seems to seek
  Her subjects, proudly, like a queen.

I see the lady of my dream:
  'Tis she, I am not here in vain.
Her body's rhythm, and the gleam
  Her eyes are lit with—this is Spain!

BORDEAUX

The dull persistence of the rain,
Long melancholy streets, the vain
  Desire, the hopeless wandering;
Here every woman has a face
Inexorably commonplace,
  Ennui is over everything.

Hour after leaden hour goes by,
I watch the leaden-coloured sky,
  I watch the rain still fall and fall.
Women and gaiety and flowers——
When they are ours, why, all is ours!
  Here Ennui is the lord of all.

NIGHT AT ARLES

Down the deserted street
A figure black from head to feet,
Save where a lifted skirt betrays
A gleam of whiteness, strays.

The moonlight, softly shed
Upon her veiled and stately head,
Lays all its ardour of repose
About her as she goes.

No woman queenlier stept,
Nor goddess, since Diana slept
Beside her sisters, when the gods
Perished from their abodes.

ROME

Here, at the summit of this sacred wood,
I seem to be half-way from Rome to heaven.
Eternal as the world, I see the seven
Hills of the world's desire, that have withstood
The lust of Kings, God's jealous fatherhood,
The snare of ancient beauty that was given
Back to the world for the world's woe, and even
The Barbarian's insolent and destroying brood.

The clouds wander above me, and beneath
The vague Campagna wanders desolate;
I see the roofs, the turrets and the dome.
And the pale air seems to exhale like breath
The melancholy and most delicate
And haughty and remembering soul of Rome.

IN THE CAMPAGNA

Love dies not but it sleeps:
  Here, where the peace of Rome,
Passing all knowledge, keeps
  My heart within its home,
I have known that repose
Which only slumber knows.

Here where my feet are set
  Upon the asphodels,
I can for once forge
  The world contains aught else
But these, the grass, the seven
Hills, and the opal heaven.

Peace nestles from the sky
  In these soft veils of air;
Bid love prepare to die,
  Which is mine only care.
If he his breath still keeps,
Hush, be content: love sleeps.

AT THE THREE FOUNTAINS

Here, where God lives among the trees,
  Where birds and monks the whole day sing
His praises in a pleasant ease,

O heart, might we not find a home,
  Here, after all our wandering?
These gates are closed, even on Rome.

Souls of the twilight wander here;
  Here, in the garden of that death
Which was for love's sake, need we fear

How sharp with bitter joy might be
  Love's lingering, last, longed-for breath,
Shut in upon eternity?

VESTIGIA. I. ROMAN MEDALLION

Ah! if you knew how vain are these delicious
tears!
How little so divine and desultory a thing
As this hour's love, alas, will seem, remembering
These tears, this hour, and this hour's love, in
other years!

The chaplet of white fading roses, one by one,
Petal from petal falling on some pensive day;
Noontide upon the shining beach, while on the
bay
A fisher's boat came slowly drifting with the sun;

Yes, and the vase of precious porcelain that you
broke;
The day you lost that ring, the day you bought
this gem:
You will remember these things, and, ah yes, with
them
The day that your heart answered mine before it
spoke.

II. ROMAN MEDALLION

To Lena in Naples

Let me not promise to remember you
Because you have been either fair or kind;
Are there not many kind fair women who
Have filled and who have faded from my mind?

And yet I think that when in days to be
I think of Naples and these April days,
Something of you will wander back to me
Along the undiscoverable ways.

Ah, what? That we have seen some Carmen die,
Or some spectacular burial of the Christ,
You may remember, if ou will; but I.

The satin of your ears, your cheeks' fine silk,
And that your mouth was like a melon sliced,
And that your neck tasted as fresh as milk.

HYMN TO GOD

I

Father of Energy,
Pattern of Beauty, uncreated Light,
Fire of the flaming deep, most awful height
Of Air, and endless motion of the Sea,
True centre of the Earth, Imagination's
Immovable foundations,
Wings of the Wind, and thought out-reaching
Thought,
Health of the spirit, the sole Music wrought
Out of the spheres' once jangled harmony,
And, lastly, Love;
Thou, who dost secretly and sweetly move
Through all created things,
Hear while thy mighty creatures cry to thee,
Veiling their proud eyes with their wings.

II

Thy creatures, that have wandered from that line
Thou sett'st them out of Chaos, that have gone
About their many businesses, not Thine,
Saying let my will, not Thy will be done;

Idolatrous, themselves deeming divine,
Bowing down each to the other for a sign,
Working for Thee in evil ways that run
Quite round the circle of Thy pure design,
Yet swerve not from the centre; these in vain
Seek liberty, and pull against a chain,
They draw but nearer Thee in the rebound;
Wings have they, yet are rooted to the ground,
Where Thou art; though unrooted they should fly,
There art Thou also: hear Thy creatures cry.

HYMN TO THE SEA

I

When I remember, going listlessly
Through the long, loud, bright tumult of the
street,
The sea,
There comes a silence into the dull air
Thick with resounding blows
As of a battle where vile armies meet;
And I am suddenly aware
As of a cleansing wind blown suddenly
From somewhere far beyond the mild and sweet
Half-human regions of the rose,
A wind that has no message to repeat,
That calls, and no man knows
What voice is calling in the sea.

II

I never loved the earth, that like a mother
Talks to her children in a voice they know,
Drawing her children close to one another
And whispering old tales of long ago.
I have no human love for man, my brother,

My dreams are not as his dreams, and I go
A lonely way alone.
I go alone to the uncompassionate sea;
I hear no private sorrow in its moan;
There are no tears
In its bright, sorrowless crying, and from me
The glittering friend I talk with never hears
A whimpering for human sympathy.

III

Call to me, call by night,
Let me come out into the moonless dark.
I see a vague shape growing slowly white
Out of the night, and, hark!
The soft plunge of the breakers on the sand,
And the sharp shriek
Of the resisting pebbles, as a hand
Clutches the land,
And then unclasps, and, indolently weak,
Scatters the spoils it only seems to seek.
Call to me out of the night,
In the irresistible, old, unknown way;
Say nothing; what is there to say?
Is there a word for delight?
I see the darkness moving, like a cloud
With rims of gusty light;
I hear an inarticulate voice crying aloud.

IV

Unknown spirit that calls
To the mysterious spirit housed in walls
Of the body, and desiring liberty,
Free spirit, promising
Nothing but to be free,
Call me this wandering
And always restless guest
That will not be at home within my breast,
This never satisfied,
Fluctuant, foster-brother of the tide;
Call subtly, and release
The secret of the waves' unresting peace,
To set my eager spirit, if not free,
Into some comparable activity.
Call to me mostly when I seem
To move through silken tangles of a dream
Forgetting what wild seabird spirit in me
Cries out for liberty.
Call to me, till, returning to my mind
In the loud city streets, busy with men,
There come cool silence, and the night, and then,
Borne inward to me, overflowing me,
The breath of a salt wind
And the voice of the sea.

HYMN TO AIR

I

Because the ways of breath
Belong not to the soul,
Which may not even control
How it shall come on death;
Therefore, beholding thus
What secret and wise care
Silently follows us,
Let the soul praise the air!

II

Shadow of life in me,
August familiar, dear
Companion ever near
Whose form I may not see;
I, when alone I walk
With men walking, or trees,
With this enchanter talk
Of older things than these.

III

This breath that enters in
To warm and purify

The source of life which I
Deem all my own within,
Has felt the earth reel round
From outer space that lies
Somewhere beneath the ground,
Somewhere above the skies.

IV

This humble unseen friend
Whom I go elbowing,—
What if it bid take wing
And in the spirit ascend
Where foot hath never trod,
Where bird hath never come,
Where man may look on God
And his thought find a home?

V

Joy wraps me round in air,
On mountain-heights I drink
Rapture, until I think
My being everywhere
Into the universe;
I laugh with divine mirth
To see the pretty, fierce
Babe-scramblings of the earth.

VI

Yet, day by day more sure,
This mercy, which I praise,
Silently all my ways
Doth follow, and endure,
Buffeted, to control
The ceaseless watch of death:
I praise thee with my soul,
Delicate air, for breath.

HYMN TO BEAUTY

There is a tyrannous lord and taskmaster
Whom men call Beauty. To be born his slave
Is to be sleepless and a wanderer
Always by day and night, and not to have
The promise of much quiet in the grave.

The colours of the world are in a plot
To snatch my spirit from me through the eyes;
They dance before me in a weedy knot
Of woodland broideries.
They lean to catch me from the woven skies,
Woo me in light, and half
Tempt with the sea's immeasurable laugh.
Beauty is too much with me: I would live
A free man, not a fugitive,
Be for an interval
The hourglass of the hours of sun and shower,
And for one hour
Feel with the drowsy oxen in the stall
Nothing at all.

Only, it may not be;
For the avenging Beauty follows me,
And whips me from my sloth
And goads me on to some new adoration.
I cannot walk through any city street
Where labour hardly elbows by starvation,
But I must meet
The inhuman Beauty both
In subtly wasted cheeks and in the spilth
Of the enriching gutter's plague-green filth.

Beauty is poured
Out of the vats of darkness; Beauty runs
Through leakages of suns,
And scatters in the splinters of the seas.
This naked wall is high enough to hoard
Legions of beauty in its crevices,
Enough for the immortal soul to endure;
And the immortal sky is not more pure,
Nor God
More empty of defect, than this brown clod.

O infinite
And endless spirit of the world's disguise,
Spirit of lies,
Beauty, the very light
Wherein we see, the sight
We see by, and the thing we seem to see,

Either give me
Humility to be indeed content
With that which thou hast lent,
And grace to take it simply as my right,
Or power not less divine
Than thine,
That I may make a world and call it mine.

THE HUMAN FACE

To imagine God with a human face
Is the utmost human disgrace;
For since the Spirit of Evil trod
Earth, none has seen the image of God.
I speak not of Jesus, he was a child,
God in Man, therefore was undefiled;
For in the Virgin Mary's womb,
He leapt, so small in so little a room;
And, as he greatened span by span,
Never was there a lovelier man,
Never one more loved by a woman:
For being human he was inhuman.
By the Jews He was Crucified
And still the Jews say that he died:
But I say no; for from evil to worse
Evil the Jews are given for a curse
Miserly souls and unbelief.
Judas, who hanged himself, was a Thief.

NOTTE VENEZIANO

I slept in Venice. The bright windy day
Merged into night, along the Zattere,
Over the long Guidecca luminous.
The night was bright and windy; and 't was thus
I fell asleep and let the moonlight fall
Across my face, and scatter on the wall;
And thus I came into the moonlight spell.
I dreamed; and in my dream a darkness fell
Upon the land and water, and the night
Poured like a flood across the infinite.
Then, as I dreamed, the billowy darkness broke
At some soft, slow, insinuating stroke,
And lo! a little core of light began
To waken softly, and its rays outran,
And, by insensible degrees, increased
Into the semblance of a phantom East;
And the whole night gathered and overflowed,
Flood upon flood, until a shining road
Of level water lay out endlessly
Into the outer reaches of the sea.
I floated forth lightly upon it, and
Suddenly, round me, there was no more land,

But rioting from the depths of the sea's caves,
The shining floor broke into hollow waves,
And rocked the house about me, and drove me on
Into the night of waters. Land was gone,
The whole live Earth shrank like a startled snail
Into the shell of heaped-up waters, pale
As moonlight in the moonlight, and now curled
Under and over and round about the world.
And the waves drew me, and the treacherous night
Into the circle of its infinite
Would fain have sucked me, and I saw the moon
Laughing an evil laugh, and the stars swoon
Into an ecstasy of merriment.
Then, knowing I was wholly lost, I sent
A great cry shouting up into the sky,
And leapt upright, and with an echoing cry
Over my head I heard the waters hiss;
And I fell slowly down the sheer abyss,
Age after endless age of such intense
And unimaginably sharp suspense,
That soul and body parted at the stroke;
And with the utter anguish I awoke,
And saw the night grow softly into day
Outside my windows on the Zattere.

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